

the kingdom, as well as the covenant to which he belongs and in which he finds the only "absolute program." Any engagement, for or against constituted authorities, which would forget to be entirely loyal to the Gospel or (which is even worse) would betray evangelical doctrine in some way or other, would no longer correspond to a prophetic or Christian attitude.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO POLITICAL UTOPIANISM AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION REPORT

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The group accepted the paper's view of the Kingdom of God as both part of salvation to be entered into now and as an eschatological hope. In the meantime, the kingdoms of this world, no matter how ideal, can never be given absolute allegiance. In relation to them the Christian exists in a tension: owing obedience, yet necessarily judging the kingdoms by the divine law and at times ready to refuse obedience when "Caesar" demands what is "God's," or when it is necessary to say, "We ought to obey God rather than man." The Christian who, as a citizen, partakes in the power process must take such positive action as lies open to him to set right the situation. The discussion was pinpointed in relation to South Africa, from which some members came. There was a strong feeling that the preaching of the Gospel in that country is greatly hindered by the unjust system maintained by a government, most of the members of which claim to be Christian. The group would like to see a united stand made by all evangelical Christians against the system so that the Gospel may be recognized as "good news to the poor," etc.

A danger at the other end of the spectrum is to be seen in newly independent nations where Christians, as part of the nation and naturally sharing its aspirations and joy, may too long give the uncritical consent to all that is done by the new government which can only be given to the Kingdom of God.

A Christian feeling bound to resist the state should check his conviction with the believers and should have the backing of the fellowship.

There was considerable discussion concerning the affluent society and the Christian's relation to this. For although material blessing is cited in the Old Testament as a token of God's blessing, and a life freed from the bonds of sin becomes more efficient in business and so brings prosperity, yet the dangers and temptations of riches are fully spelled out in the New Testament. While riches themselves are not condemned as sinful, the warnings are so pointed that Christians need to be sensitive not only to their own acquisitive instincts but politically critical of government policies designed to produce evergrowing affluence for their own state, especially when this is at the expense of sub-standard living for trading partners.

The revolution produced by God when a man comes into his kingdom is the revolution of the heart, more radical and essentially different from the revolutions produced in the political world. In a discussion on the use of force, it was doubted by many that this could be justified; others spoke of force as being right in overthrowing an unjust system

maintained by force. Revolution by force can never be more than a partial solution. Only the heart revolution of Christ produces a "final solution."

In looking at utopianism, it was noted that all utopias can only be arrangements for organizing fallen men whose sin will break down the systems. Systems depersonalize people; in God's kingdom they become fully personal remade men. Systems only change conditions; God changes men. Utopian systems, such as Marxism, may in fact demand the same action as Christians desire in a given situation. For the Marxist this will be the solution. For the Christian it can only be a step to cope with the present situation; he will not commit himself to it as a solution. Only God's bringing his Kingdom will be the solution.

THE BIBLICAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP, WITNESS, AND SERVICE

Hector Espinoza

PART ONE: The present perplexity concerning the mission of the church

The "*sui generis*" character of the church resides in Jesus, its Lord. The authority of this sovereign is found in all circumstances and all the decisions of this living organism. Nevertheless, the church, being a human structure, the realization of its mission has depended on the image or idea that in fixed time it has made of itself. That image was born of a particular historic situation. The consequence is not completely desirable since the church could stay prisoner of the image it has formed of itself.

There exists uncertainty concerning the mission of the church, caused in part by the enormous tasks with which the church is faced in our days; the unrest, the society in which it develops, and the issues with which it communicates. Before her is presented with unavoidable priority the unfinished task of the proclamation of the Gospel to every creature. In its redemptive role the church nourishes the certainty that each task to be fulfilled represents a glorious opportunity; and that as numerous, urgent, and overbearing as are the issues, tasks, and circumstances that demand its immediate attention, so equally as numerous are the opportunities.

This crisis of the church has not been only caused by the characteristics of the society in which we live, but by the church itself. Hans Kung says that we should not think of, "An ideal church in the abstract spheres of a theological theory, but a real church in the middle of this world and in the history of this world." Neither does the New Testament begin with a doctrine concerning the church that later would be realized, but with the reality of the church concerning that which was reflected upon before. The real church is in the first place, a happening, an act, and an historical event." We are living that reality and confront ourselves with certain issues that reflect the enigma that exists in the business of the church.

1. *Rationalism versus faith* God is found bound earthward in an action of salvation to the world. This work in our days is seen hindered by the confrontation of rationalism and faith. In the first place, thinking is more important than being. Meanwhile for the Christian thinkers like Paul, Augustine, and Pascal, reason should be subordinated to faith. For example, "The justice of God by means of faith in Jesus Christ for all that believe in him. Because there is no difference, inasmuch as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God". "It is not understood in order to believe, it is believed in order to understand"; "the heart has reasons that reason does not know. This is what faith is: God perceptible to the heart, not to reason". For them, then, existence which is in the revealed God precedes thinking.

At first we observe a frequent hesitancy in the work of evangelization. Allowing itself to be carried by the rationalism of an incredulous